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Travel Montana UPDATE

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Task Force Recommends Fine Tuning Of State Tourism Funding Formula

"The system is not broke, so don't fix it" was a common theme from the nearly 90 Montanans who presented testimony to the Bed Tax Futures Task Force during their 5-month study of the best future use of the state's tourism "bed tax" revenue. Issues such as more or new funding for community services and infrastructure, convention promotion, eliminating or increasing the tourism "bed tax" were brought up during the study period, but the consensus of the task force members was that only "fine tuning" of the funding structure was warranted. Here are their final recommendations:

A. Maintain tourism "bed tax" at 4% level.

B. Slightly adjust tourism "bed tax" allocation formula:

Dept. Of Revenue	same
State Parks	6.5% *(same)*
Montana Heritage Commission	4.5%

(new category for historic property preservation and interpretation, replaces specific $ allocation for Virginia City which would end in 2 years)

Montana Historical Society	1% *(same)*
Institute for Tourism & Recreation Research, University of Montana	1.25% *(reduction from 2.5%)*
Non-profit Tourism Related Research Grants	.25% *(new category)*
Available for Department of Commerce	86.5%
75% Travel Montana	*(same)*
25% Six Tourism Regions/9 Convention & Visitor Bureaus	*(same)*

C. Report to Legislature through interim committee which reviews Montana Commerce Department activities in between legislative sessions.

D. Remove exemptions for collection of tourism "bed tax" such as those based on room or campground lodging fees below 60% of the state lodging rate reimbursement (currently about $21).

E. Reduce Travel Montana's annual "bed tax" allocation to Commerce Department's International Trade Program from $200,000 to $25,000.

In addition, the task force members recommended that if state lawmakers do not feel the tourism "bed tax" should be dedicated to tourism development and promotion, they should eliminate the tax and create an entirely new tourism program. The task force recommendations will be presented to the state's Tourism Advisory Council (TAC) for action at their Oct. 5 & 6 meeting in Red Lodge. TAC representatives will present their selected recommendations to Governor Racicot at a November 9 meeting in Helena.

After the October TAC meeting, the task force final report will be available on the Internet at <travelmontana.state.mt.us/future.htm> The website also lists the task force members who committed a lot of time and energy to this study over the last five months. They deserve a big "THANKS."

Hardin, Dillon and Anaconda Selected For Tourism Assessment Program

Hardin, Dillon and Anaconda will participate in the state's Community Tourism Assessment Program (CTAP) during the next 8 months. They were selected for the "self help" tourism development program from 7 excellent applications. In October, the communities will hold their organizational meetings with representatives from the agencies that provide CTAP technical assistance: MSU Extension, ITRR and Travel Montana.

"We wish each community well in their work and we hope they will find the assessment to be a valuable tool for improving the quality of life and strengthening the economy in their communities," said Commerce Department Director Dr. Blouke in the announcement of the CTAP community selections.

Through CTAP, a community follows an 8-month process of analysis, assessment, and evaluation. The process involves a comprehensive analysis of the community's current economic structure, its assets, citizen attitudes toward tourism, area lifestyles, and the community's existing and potential resources with regard to tourism. The three communities join 15 others who have participated in the CTAP process since it was initiated in 1990.

Travel Montana Website Update

The Internet is a dynamic place. Changes happen all the time. Travel Montana's Internet crew has been working hard keeping the tourism web sites current, interesting and accessible. To improve accessibility, some addresses have been made simpler and the content more specific to user interests. Here are Travel Montana's Internet addresses:

Year round:
visitmt.com
Winter information:
wintermt.com or skimt.com
Features:
lewisandclark.state.mt.us,
kids.state.mt.us
Alberta/MT promotion:
2nations.state.mt.us
MT/WY promotion:
3parks.state.mt.us

If you are wondering about the "skimt" and "wintermt" sites, they are the same place accessed through different addresses. Travel Montana's Consumer Marketing Manager Suzanne Elfstrom explains that a "stand alone" winter site allows more accurate tracking of users and their interests. She says the "skimt" address was used in the state's downhill ski ads, again, for better response tracking.

In addition to two addresses, the winter site has received a graphic and information make-over, and users will find information about discount packages offered by nine Montana ski areas: Bear Paw, Big Mountain, Big Sky, Bridger Bowl, Discovery Basin, Lost Trail/Powder Mountain, Red Lodge, Montana Snowbowl and Showdown.

"The Horse Whisperer"/ Montana Promoted In Pacific Rim Countries

The Pacific Rim release of Robert Redford's "The Horse Whisperer" includes promotions highlighting not only the film but Montana as well. The state Commerce Department's International Trade Program reports that a full page ad in Japan's Nishi Nippon newspaper will devote 1/3 of its space to the movie, and the rest to Montana. This comes courtesy of Buena Vista International. In China, Taiwan's top pop singer, Emil, traveled to Montana's Paradise Valley to record a music video dedicated to "The Horse Whisperer." Travel Montana's Film Office reports that in addition to the video location, Emil's CD will feature a cover photo of Montana. In other made-in-Montana movie news, Robin Williams' "What Dreams May Come" hit the nation's theaters on Oct.2. This film was shot last year in Glacier Park and on the Blackfeet Reservation.

Tourism People in Motion

There are new faces in the state's tourism program along with some familiar folks in new places. Here is the movement we've tracked over the last month.

- **Viki Eggers**: moved from West Yellowstone CVB to administrative assistant for Yellowstone Country.
- **Renee Stoll:** new Missouri River Country Executive Secretary.
- **Debbie Donovan**, Larslan (NE of Glasgow), and **Kathy Brown**, Billings, are new TAC members. They replace **Diane Brandt**, Glasgow, and **Edythe McCleary**, Hardin.
- MTRI Coordinator **Mary Pipal** is now a school counselor/curriculum developer in Alaska.
- **Mary Boyle**, Billings-based freelance radio reporter/writer/editor, is Travel Montana's new Publicity Coordinator.

Travel Montana Calendar

October
13-15 Incentive Travel & Meeting Executives Trade Show, Chicago
14-16 Yellowstone Winter Use EIS Cooperators Mtg, Idaho Falls
22-26 Association of Film Commissioners Cineposium, Denver
November
9 TAC & Governor Racicot Meet, Helena

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS TO THE MONTANA SUMMER CALENDAR OF EVENTS (April-Oct. 1999) IS **NOVEMBER 20, 1998**. Contact Susan Albrecht, 444-1617, for information.

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